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dwarf among her servants (54) and that the role was equally interesting to
nineteenth-century audiences, when their queen was also Empress of India.
The treatment of the amateur actors of Athens has ranged from farcical, to
picturesque (authentic Athenian tools in Quince's shop), to a reading empha­
sizing Bottom's class sensitivity almost as much as his sexuality. I am
intrigued by the theatrical association of high voices with the nonhuman, as
shown in the use of a female voice for Oberon in the nineteenth century and
a counter-tenor in Benjamin Britten's 1960 opera. Usually associated with a
homoerotic subtext, this device would be worth exploring further, and outside
the Western tradition. In Japanese kabuki theater, the romantic male lead is
sometimes played by an actor traditionally associated with female roles,
because such androgynous figures are thought to convey a softer, more
romantic image. Williams's ideological approach may be dated, but the infor­
mation he provides will be useful and pleasurable for a long time.

Lois Potter
University of Delaware

Major Women Writers of Seventeenth-Century England, ed. James Fitzmaurice,
Josephine A. Roberts, Carol L. Barash, Eugene R. Cunnar, and Nancy A.

Even though the editors of Major Women Writers of Seventeenth-Century
England claim that "bits and pieces of their [authors'] poetry, fiction, and
drama have been in print continuously for the last three hundred years" (i), it
is always exciting and gratifying to see the appearance of yet another volume
devoted to women writers of the early modern period. The very fact that I am
able to say "yet another" volume shows both that there were many women
writing during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England and there
are now many (mostly women) scholars working to bring these writers' texts
into print in modern scholarly editions. Major Women Writers of Seventeenth-
Century England takes its place among an important body of texts whose
overt political purpose—bringing to light previously un- or little-known
women-authored texts—is at least as important as its literary or scholarly one.
But this anthology also serves an important pedagogical purpose. Anyone
who has ever tried to construct a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century literature
course that includes work by women authors knows that it cannot be done without doing a fair amount of standing on one's head and running up substantial copying bills. Therefore, this textbook will be welcomed by many instructors—including myself—who can show their students that women authors did hold an important position in the landscape of early modern England.

The anthology consists of substantial selections of works by Amelia Lanyer, Elizabeth Cary, Mary Wroth, Margaret Cavendish, Katherine Philips, Aphra Behn, and Anne Finch and brief ones by Rachel Speght and Ester Sowernam. The introductory material clearly states the editorial position, and the chosen texts are annotated well so undergraduate readers will not have problems with archaic usage. Each author has her own introduction, bibliography, and textual notes. The introductions are adequate and the bibliographies solid and comprehensive and quite useful for anyone wanting to begin—or even continue—work on the women anthologized. The textual notes are very full, perhaps more suited to graduate students than to undergraduates. Yet while it is not difficult to argue that this anthology is needed, its construction and philosophy raises many difficult and important questions regarding the nature of anthologies, the gender-marking of literary texts and genres, the creation of a “female canon,” and the place of feminist theory/criticism of women-authored texts within early modern studies generally.

My first three points are encapsulated within the title of the anthology, especially in the words “women” and “major.” The inclusion of the word “women” in the title of an anthology dealing with a century that some (many?) still think had “few” women writers recalls the publication in the 1980s of The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women. While the heftiness of that Norton volume “proved” that there really were very many texts by very many women writers that spanned the chronology of literature in English and deserved collection, the publication of a separate anthology of literature “by women” raised as many questions as it answered. For example: why did women need a separate anthology? Were their works ineligible—for whatever reason(s)—for inclusion within the “basic” Norton anthologies of canonical male authors (which, to be fair, by this time did include more women-authored texts)? Was it better for literature classes to consider women-authored texts as necessarily “different” from male-authored ones? Why? Did gender, or biology, make so much difference to the “creative spirit” that scholars now needed two canonical yardsticks—a male one and a female one?

The editors of Major Women Writers of Seventeenth-Century England covertly address many of these questions in their preliminary material, the
"Introduction" and "Feminist Criticism and Seventeenth-Century Women Writers." While they make an excellent case for the study of seventeenth-century women writers, they make less of a case for the production of a separate anthology rather than radically revising a "standard" anthology to include more women authors among the men. Most of the justification for this single-sex move comes in their "Feminist Criticism" section, which presents a mini-lecture on the history of Anglo-American feminist criticism and gynocriticism—which, despite some dated sources, will probably be very helpful for the undergraduates and general readers who are the target audience for this volume (8)—and sees feminist work in the early modern period as dealing primarily with the resurrection of texts by women (13) and secondarily/concurrently with "the interpretation of the literary and historical value of these works" (14). As a means to achieving the latter goal, the editors suggest that "personal biography—and especially that part of the biography that is specifically affected by the writer's sex, such as marriage and motherhood—infuses the essays on many of these writers, providing a map by which to read their works" (14). The editors do point out how this methodology does go against post-structuralist assertions of the "death of the author," yet they do not indicate how their methodology does not engage with many of the current theoretical explorations in early modern studies generally. Similarly, the editors mention recent works that deal with issues of female subjectivity and historical contextualization—works by Marilyn L. Williamson, Hilda Smith, Mary Ellen Lamb to name just a few—no specific mention is made of the more recent, highly theorized work of Dympna Callaghan (on Elizabeth Cary), Kim Hall (on Mary Wroth and issues of race), Margo Hendricks (on Aphra Behn), Rosemary Kegl (on Cavendish), Gwynne Kennedy (on Cary), and Wendy Wall (on female authorship). Nor do the editors consider how current work in early modern studies on class, various marginalized groups (sodomites, tribades, virgins, racial and religious others, the poor), and non-elite genres (antitheatrical tracts, homilies, scaffold speeches, etc.) impacts upon feminist work in the early centuries generally and work on women-authored texts in particular. While articles and books on some of these issues by the above-mentioned scholars are listed in the various bibliographies in the anthology, the fact that such names and issues rarely appear in the introductory matter to each author suggests that the editors see the discussion of female-authored texts as operating in a sort of gendered vacuum, removed from other work being done in early modern studies.

My feeling is reinforced by the second word in the title I wish to consider: "major." The word "major" works in at least two ways. It signals both that
this anthology is not meant to be a comprehensive study of all women writers of the period and that the editors are making a value judgment about the authors they have chosen. With the exception of the pamphlet authors, whom I will discuss separately, the authors chosen can best be described as "elite"—either because of their social positions (Cavendish, Wroth, Cary, Finch), the genres in which they work (Wroth, Lanyer, Philips), or their current popularity (Behn). Few students of the early modern period will be surprised by this list; few will not have heard of all of these women. Thus by choosing these authors, the editors have made a decision to help canonize certain women authors at the expense of others. This decision has the unfortunate tendency to replicate the patriarchal goal of anthologizing only the "greatest" of literary texts. I am surprised to see such a move in a volume that uses feminist criticism as one of its basic political/philosophical principles. I would have liked to see selections by women authors who have not already emerged as "leaders" of the field, especially when work by these leaders is often available in other editions.

The editors do seem to challenge their use of the term "major" in their inclusion of selections from Rachel Speght's and Esther Sowernam's pamphlets on the Swetnam controversy. However, they include only very brief selections from each pamphlet and place these selections at the very end of the volume, suggesting that they are either an "afterthought" or a reluctant inclusion of "dubiously" literary texts among the obviously literary. It is this odd treatment of the pamphlets that reinforces what I see as the disturbingly elitist focus of this anthology. One of the important considerations to come out of work on female authors of the earlier centuries is that women often, and usually of necessity, wrote in genres not employed by men and considered, therefore, nonelite or nonliterary. Recent work in early modern studies has validated such nonelite "female" genres as translations, testament poems, scaffold speeches, letters, etc., as it has similarly validated such nonelite "male" genres as sermons and homilies, tracts, discovery narratives, wardrobe lists, and political and legal treatises. Similarly, recent important critical work has focused on male authors who would, fifty years ago, have been considered "minor" and unworthy of critical regard. Thus despite the "newness" of this anthology's focus on women writers, its refusal seriously to consider nonelite writers or genres as being worthy of serious study points out a latent "dated" aspect of the volume. The introduction mentions that the period after 1640 could be viewed as "a century of revolution for women writers, whose numbers vastly increased" (2). It was a time in which "Quaker women . . . published numerous religious pamphlets, prophetic and mystical
discourses, and personal testimonies," which are not considered in this anthology because they "do not fit in the customary literary categories" (5). But isn't the fact the women often wrote—or had to write—in genres that were not customarily literary the point? Why are Cavendish's Sociable Letters—"arguably her best book" (6)—acceptably "literary" while pamphlets by Speght, Sowernam, and numerous (often anonymous) Puritan and Quaker women that deal with contemporary religious, political, and social issues not? I must admit that I fail to understand the distinction made here between "literary" letters and "nonliterary" pamphlets (and other genres).

Everyone who considers an anthology has her own ideas about what she would include if she were making such decisions. Naturally, no one can really agree on anthology selections, so the following constitute my own personal "wish list" for what I would change in this anthology. My general preference in anthologies is to include complete works rather than selections. Thus I am glad the editors chose to include two complete plays, Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* and Behn's *The Rover*. Yet as I say this, I also want to add a quibble. Both texts are available in other editions. Current publishing trends in both academic and commercial houses to bring out "what sells" rather than "what needs to be available" means that it is often impossible to find a reasonably priced teaching edition of texts by authors who are not considered "canonical"—and therefore "marketable." To anthologize texts that are readily available elsewhere is to limit the range of texts generally available. I hate to seem to be "restricting" the freedom of choice of editors, but the sad reality is that such duplication can ultimately restrict what is taught and studied. If Cary's only play is eliminated from consideration, we are left with her history of Edward II. This text would make a marvelous inclusion, though perhaps the editors did not think it sufficiently literary. While on the subject of plays, I would lobby for the inclusion of one of Cavendish's plays. *The Convent of Pleasure* seems to be the one that is taught most, though I would be happy to have a modern edition of a complete text of any Cavendish play readily available. Also, the inclusion of a play would—with the Cary and Behn plays—allow students to get some sense of the range of plays—a genre rarely employed—by women authors as well as the vast difference between the plays of these three authors, partially explained by the fact that only Behn wrote for public production.

Vast texts like the *Urania* must be the bane of anthologizers. Obviously, the entire *Urania* could not be included in this anthology. But I question why such disembodied sections were chosen? I would suggest, as an alternative, the inclusion of one whole book. While it is true that anthologies
of sixteenth-century literature tend to produce a student body that thinks \textit{The Faerie Queene} is only about Redcrosse, Una, and Duessa, at least such students have a sense of how an entire book of Spenser's epic works. They know how maddening and exciting all the digressions can be and do get at least some sense of how the narrative progresses. I would like them to get the same sense of the \textit{Urania}. And if it is indeed true, as I also believe, that Wroth radically "revises" the conventions of the Petrarchan sonnet sequence (5), why not provide the whole \textit{Pamphilia to Amphilanthus} to allow instructors and students the opportunity to compare the sequence to those of Shakespeare, Spenser, or Sidney?

I think it is really difficult to produce an anthology. People—from reviewers to colleagues to students—will always find fault with it. While I may disagree with the editors of this text for several reasons, I do agree with them that anthologies of early modern women authors are necessary. I hope to see many more such anthologies in the years to come.

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In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to the question of French national identity. John D. Lyons's \textit{The Tragedy of Origins: Pierre Corneille and Historical Perspective} provides a very important and illuminating historical dimension to this issue. While some scholars view national identity narrowly as a uniquely modern concern brought about by the French Revolution, other scholars see national identity in a larger context that dates back several centuries. Lyons shows that many seventeenth-century historians sought to define France's identity by establishing a national history. In their efforts to trace that history, these historians were primarily concerned with fixing the origin of the French nation since that would shape France's historical narrative and hence its self-image as a nation.

Lyons convincingly demonstrates how Corneille's plays were deeply informed by the seventeenth-century historical debates about the origins of the French nation. Lyons offers close textual readings of five Corneille plays, showing that if analyzed in sequence they form an account of the origin of